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Rosalind Pace

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ROSALIND PACE

Extra Socks, With the Water Rising

Not even God says how deep the water will be,
just ask Noah, who at least had time to build his ark.
No warning bells, no sirens, no loud voice
thundering out of the clouds, just the water rising

as if the earth itself were being dissolved by tears.
For the trek to higher ground we take
a few raisins, a pair of extra socks, a piece of bread,

and join the others, who are traveling
with no passports and no luggage.
We cross rickety bridges of sticks. Rivers
overflow their bloody banks, armored cars
run each other off the road, everyone
is accused of disloyalty, and we are bewildered
about whether or not kneeling
is prayer or suffering.

And what does it mean
to lie face down as the dead do, or face up
as the buried do. Oh Noah, Noah, slogging
patiently back and forth in the slops

as your boat rode out the storm, what
can you say to us now as we seek shelter
and hunker among broken chairs
and share our raisins and our stories.

Maybe all we can do is curl up
against a wall, pull on dry socks,
and remember, for a few hours of sleep,
what it once felt like to be comfortable and safe.